

species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the deep-water species fishery are: All rockfish of the genera *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus*, Greenland turbot, Dover sole, rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, and sablefish.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20 (e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent exceeding the third seasonal allowance of halibut mortality in the GOA. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action is impracticable and contrary to public interest. The fleet will soon take the seasonal allowance of halibut mortality. Further delay would only result in the seasonal allowance being exceeded and disrupt the FMP's objective of seasonally apportioning halibut mortality throughout the year. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 18, 1997.

Gary C. Matlock,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961126334-7025-02; I.D. 071897B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). NMFS is requiring that catch of Pacific ocean perch in this area be treated in the same manner as prohibited species and discarded at sea with a minimum of injury. This action is necessary because the Pacific ocean perch 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) in this area has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 19, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 1997 TAC of Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the

GOA was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997) as 5,352 metric tons (mt), determined in accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the 1997 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1997 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA; therefore, providing notice and opportunity for public comment is impracticable and contrary to public interest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. The fleet has already taken the TAC for Pacific ocean perch. Further delay would only result in overharvest and disrupt the FMP's objective of allowing incidental catch to be retained throughout the year. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 18, 1997.

Gary C. Matlock,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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